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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION IRAN-RUSSIA IRAQ US-BOLIVIA US-  
ARGENTINA US-EUROPE CUBA 02/27/06;BUENOS AIRES

## 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Weekend stories cover Iran and Russia agreeing to establish a joint uranium enrichment venture; the danger of civil war in Iraq; Palestinian PM-designate Haniyeh's statement that Hamas would establish "peace in stages" if Israel were to withdraw to the borders it held before the 1967 Middle East war; Venezuela cutting flights by US carriers Delta Air Lines, Continental Airlines and American Airlines in the latest dispute between Washington and Caracas; the US policy on Bolivia; the US-Argentine bilateral relationship; the renewed US-EU ties; and the new attack of the Cuban government on Argentina. Left-of-center "Pagina 12" front-page "The main Ford business executive, accused of having kidnapped 25 Ford delegates after the 1976 military coup in Argentina, is a retired lieutenant colonel who used to work as head of security for the factory and was subsequently hired by the US Embassy where he worked until 2004."

## 2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

### - "Limits"

Marcelo Cantelmi, international editor of leading "Clarín," writes (02/27) "If the deal announced yesterday is implemented, the US will have to find an alternative route to get Iran under control. The Russian decision has the Western support but the White House is not fond of it. We all know the spat between US VP Dick Cheney--who has asked for reports from his spies on Vladimir Putin, whom he does not trust--and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who wants to resume talks with Moscow. Cheney is telling Putin that he must agree to discipline or face frozen bilateral ties. However, the Russian president is acting as though his country were still the other superpower in the world. Before this, he validated Hamas, thereby ignoring the isolation demanded by the US after the Hamas' victory in the Palestinian territories. These are signs of a world in which real power has changed and limits cannot be ignored."

### - "Iraq - between tragedy and disaster, the civil war"

Oscar Raul Cardoso, international analyst of leading "Clarín," writes (02/26) "No one could have predicted in its entire extent the new 'by-product' of the US-UK occupation of Iraq - the possibility of a new civil war between the religious majority of the country (Shiite Muslims) and the largest minority, the Sunnis.

"Both factions, separated by their form of Islamic interpretation, have only one thing in common: the profound disgust toward the occupying forces, on which they project

blame for all their evils...

"... The best thing to be said is that this is a curious present from the 'Western democracy,' which has allowed for the enactment of a constitution that has not ensured a significant participation of the Sunni minority, and has also allowed for the election of a Shiite government which has unleashed retaliation against the Sunnis.

"Washington and London's way to see the Iraqi problem has obviously worn out."

- "'Washington lacks a clear policy on Bolivia'"

Gerardo Lissardy, on special assignment in Washington for leading "Clarín," writes (02/26) "Academian Eduardo Gamarra invited Bolivian coca leader and official senator Leonilda Zurita to lecture at the Florida International University... but Zurita's trip was thwarted when the US cancelled her visa on grounds of terrorist suspicions, all of which unleashed the first diplomatic incident between La Paz and Washington.

"After the incident, Gamarra told 'Clarín' that Bolivian President Evo Morales himself lacks a US visa, and he warned that Washington should change this in order to assess the direction of the US-Bolivian relationship.

"Gamarra said 'There is no US policy on Bolivia, they are looking for one.'... There is a trend at the US State Department, another at the US Congress, another at the Treasury Department, another one at the Department of Defense, and there is no (overall) consistent reaction.

"According to the analyst, the Bush administration decided

to wait and see 'how the sea of contradictions evolves in Bolivia,' where Morales faces a hard choice - satisfying the social movements that brought him to power or address the international accusations placed on Bolivia since 1988 regarding the struggle against drugs."

- "De Vido is preparing two crucial trips to the US and Germany"

Mariano Obarrio, political columnist of daily-of-record "La Nación," comments (02/26) "The Federal Planning Minister, Julio De Vido, is the new strong man of the Argentine Government... With the President's support, De Vido is preparing two trips that are crucial for the Argentine Government and that will take place in the next couple of months - one to the US and the other to Germany. He will have an intense agenda of negotiations in which he will attempt to continue healing the US-Argentine bilateral relationship and the EU-Argentine ties.

"... De Vido became a foreign minister in the shadows. He conveyed a message that the Argentine relationship with Caracas is focused on State business, not on an ideological and political alliance.

"In the next two months, De Vido is reported to visit US Assistant Secretary of the Western Hemisphere Thomas Shannon.

"The Argentine Government started to heal the US-Argentine bilateral relationship following the tension at the Mar del Plata SOA..., when De Vido lectured at the Council of the Americas in New York last December."

- "The new European center"

Claudio Uriarte, international analyst of left-of-center "Página 12," writes (02/26) "Europe is turning to the right. Is Europe turning to the right? In any event, 'nations change very slowly, but the people never change'...

"... No, Europe is not exactly turning to the right, but to

the center... Perhaps one could argue that it is turning to the right if one bears in mind its old stance, what Donald Rumsfeld would call 'the old left wing'... Now, there is a new convergence between US policy and all of Europe. For example, in the Iran case, just a few days ago, the French foreign Ministry launched a strong warning against the Iranian nuclear program. This was a very unusual attitude in a country that generally does its best to win prestige through diplomatic incidents with the 'giant'...

"In Great Britain, David Cameron attempted to override Blair in his transatlantic solidarity by criticizing Blair for a weak stance regarding the ayatollah regime...

"Of course, not only Europe should take pride for this new transatlantic convergence. Since Condoleezza Rice took over as US Secretary of State, the US foreign policy has also slowly returned to multilateralism, which was favored by the US State Department's traditional old guard. But we'll have to see what happens when the escalation with Iran goes from words to deeds, and the current UN and IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency)'s round of conversations ends up in a predictable failure."

### 13. EDITORIALS

- "Also a religious war in Iraq"

An editorial in leading "Clarín" reads (02/27) "The attack against one of the most important Shiite mosques in Iraq has worsened the religious factor of the Iraqi confrontation, which scares away the liberalizing and democratizing purposes with which the US justified its invasion of the country...

"A religious war between Sunnis and Shiites is another ghost hovering over Iraq and it could trouble even further the search for a reconstruction of Iraq on a representative and democratic basis. On the other hand, the use of sacred religious sites as targets for attacks is another expression of the progressive degradation of current wars and conflicts."

- "Cuba - new attack on freedom"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" editorializes (02/25) "The Cuban government has just given another sign of the thoughtless and even illogical way in which it chooses to handle its international relationships. This time, the target of its misbehavior was Argentine writer, historian and journalist Jose Ignacio Garcia Hamilton, who was denied the entry to Cuba in spite of the fact that the Cuban embassy in Buenos Aires granted him a Cuban visa.

"... As we have said many times on these pages, the solution lies in the hands of the international democratic community, of which Argentina is part, and it implies wielding continued pressure on Castro so that he puts an end to the atrocities of his government and democratic transition can start on the island along with the return of individual liberties."

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